

## Washington Letter

Washington, D. C., November 25.—A metropolitan newspaper, whose editorial policy can best be defined as "anti-everything," has just completed an investigation into the state of employment at the industrial centers of our nation. This paper is neither favorable nor unfavorable to the party in or out of power. It can hurl editorial brickbats or bouquets with equal facility, although it must be admitted that its editorial bouquets are decidedly scarce. Nor is this paper a calamity howler. It detests jingoism, and deprecates both the sort of activity that would create a war scare or bring on a financial panic. All of which shows that its investigation has been impartial, and that its figures are of the kind that do not lie.

Out of some forty large manufacturing centers investigated in states extending from Massachusetts west to Minnesota and from Michigan south to Texas, it was found that the time of labor had been materially reduced, and that there was in all industries a tendency to reduce help. The reduction of hours ranged all the way from five, instead of seven days, a week to half and even quarter time. In many instances factories were closed indefinitely. The reduction of the working force was found to be greatest among the railroads, but by no means slight among the mills and factories. For instance in Chicago ninety per cent of the factories and work shops have reduced forces or curtailed hours. Forty per cent of the building trade workers are idle. And twenty-three per cent of the wood workers are out. Practically all the machinists are working on short time and more iron moulders are idle than ever before at this season. Worcester, Mass., describes the depression there as the worst in ten years. Pittsburg announces fifty thousand men out of the mills and shops. Indianapolis reports a fifty per cent reduction in the forces of all the large manufacturing. In the vicinity of St. Paul, Minn., twenty-one saw mills and some mines have suspended work, throwing ten thousand men out of employment. In Wilmington, Del., and in Bridgeport, Conn., from four to five thousand men have been laid off. These are but specimen instances taken at random from the report I am citing. They show in this year of republican prosperity and full dinner pails a marked reduction of hours and labor in all industries practically everywhere.

The moral to be drawn from these facts and figures is obvious. It simply means that it is the grossest fraud for a political party to pose as the guarantor of prosperity. It means that the capital coined at the expense of the democratic party by republicans because a panic that actually started in a republican and broke with all its fury, in a democratic administration, was unfair. Therefore it is just as well that the people understand that there is a present depression the causes of which can be found in a republican administration, regardless of who shall be in power after March, 1909.

Secretary Cortelyou has announced that the treasury will offer \$50,000,000 of Panama canal bonds, bearing two per cent interest for sale. It will also offer \$100,000,000 in bonds of certificates bearing three per cent interest. The Panama bonds must be retired at the end of thirty years. The certificates, which are practically circulating paper, have only one year to run. There is no question concerning the legality of the canal bonds; there is some question as to the propriety at least of the certificates which it is understood are to be called "Roosevelt certificates." The law which authorized their issuance was passed at the beginning of the Spanish war. It so happened that they were not needed to finance that rather inconspicuous contest. Nobody remembered that the law should be repealed, so it stands still on the statute books and it has been used now to add greatly to the volume of the currency. I do not think anybody will criticize the action of the authorities in thus adding to the circulating medium and helping the banks, the investors and the common people of today. Of course it's a violation of law or an evasion of it. Out in Chicago the banks are printing clearing house certificates which pass from hand to hand like a United States note might. There is a federal law which declares that notes of this sort should be subject to a ten per cent tax, but it has never been applied. The new Roosevelt certificates, so-called, were legal only in time of war and could be attacked if one so chose

to do in the United States supreme court today. In brief the financial and banking system of the United States has reached the point at which it must resort to unlawful methods, must beg the national government to aid it in violating the law, or must collapse. It is interesting to note that in his letter to Mr. Cortelyou the president said that the first two weeks of the incoming congress was going to be given over to the correction of the present financial system. It would be more interesting if we could find out what the president's plan for its correction might be.

This year congress will meet unusually early. The day of meeting will be December 2. It is declared that the first national measure to be introduced will be one for currency reform. The first immediate measure will be one of interest to Washington only, or to travelers coming to Washington, namely a bill authorizing the district commissioners to allow the street railroads to come directly to the new three million dollar station, and thereby enable people arriving in the city to avoid a walk of a quarter of a mile or to evade the extortions of hackmen. It is promised that the next measure shall be one for currency reform. Nobody can find out what the form of this bill will be. Of course it will not be a resurrection of the free silver issue. I doubt whether it will be a demand for the asset currency. But that there will be an attempt to arrange the currency affairs of the nation within the first week of congress there can be no doubt whatever.

A senator of the United States talking with me today said that in his judgment this issue if presented would mean a long and bitter debate. The senator pointed to an interview published in all the New York newspapers by Senator Bulkeley of Connecticut in which he belittled the effort of the administration to correct the present financial stringency by issuing Panama bonds or three per cent Roosevelt certificates. This is what Mr. Bulkeley is quoted as having said: "What good is it going to do to issue these new bonds or to offer these certificates? That doesn't mean the real increase of the circulating money of the nation. It might coax out of some safety deposit boxes a moderate amount of money and put it into the United States treasury, but how will it get out thence and into general circulation?" I do not profess to quote Mr. Bulkeley precisely because my knowledge of his utterances come only through certain newspapers which may have misquoted him. But it is a fact that public men and financiers today are taking very much the same view that he expresses, if the expression has been properly reported.

Senator Foraker is in Washington conducting the renewed sessions of the committee investigating the Brownsville episode. The senator is determined in his attitude and unwearying in his efforts to discover the truth of the affair which led to the discharge from the United States army of a whole battalion of negro troops. Incidentally the troops so discharged were among those who at Santiago saved the much-advertised Rough Riders from defeat and destruction.

The story is an old one. People are not now greatly interested in it. Yet it is likely to be a very prominent issue in congress this winter. Mr. Roosevelt discharged this battalion of negro troops. Senator Foraker protests. I have reason to know that in the coming congress a bill will be introduced urging the discharge of all colored troops from the army. It is not merely going to be presented, but it is going to be pressed. Naturally Mr. Foraker and his associates in the Brownsville inquiry will oppose, but it will have great strength if it gets out of the committee in either house or senate.

President Roosevelt's message, so I am told, will start with a reference to the financial panic which the country has just experienced. He will declare in that message that the panic was not due to any lack of prosperity, to any stringency in the money market or any contraction of the currency, but simply to a general lack of confidence on the part of the public in great banks and financial institutions due to the operations of such financiers as Mr. Harriman, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Heinze or the Thomas brothers. To a certain extent Mr. Roosevelt is right. But as was pointed out to me today, he and Secretary Cortelyou have rather discredited his own position by the attempt he has made to correct the financial troubles. If it is due to mere lack of confidence and not to a scarcity of the circulating medium, why issue one hundred and fifty million dollars in bonds and certificates? If it is due to a lack of confidence on the part

of the people, why should the president not call congress together and take steps to restore confidence? Is it not possible that the enormous increase in the cost of living in this country, the steadily decreasing of wages among those who work for a weekly wage, and the notorious enhancement of the incomes of those whom for lack of a better word must be described as the plutocracy may have had something to do with the present situation?

Times are hard—for the poor. There is no need of questioning that. The New York World two or three days ago printed a column and a half of dispatches from points all through the United States which indicated the discharge from employment of easily twenty-five thousand men. The southern railroad with its headquarters at Washington has laid off nearly three thousand. The Hill railroads in the northwest have stopped all construction work. In the face of this situation the mere shouting of the administration about prodigious prosperity is ineffective. The mere issuance of bonds to the banks or to the people who will have to take the money out of the banks to get the bonds or certificates will not relieve the trouble. The one thing that will help will be an endeavor to reduce the cost of living in the country so that people may not suffer exactions from trusts and from monopolies. But on the question of tariff, which protects the monopolies, the administration stands pat. It is just as pat as Speaker Cannon or as Vice President Fairbanks. It offers no suggestion of relief from tariff extortions, and I have the very best authority for stating that the only word in the message to be sent to congress by President Theodore Roosevelt on the second of December concerning tariff revision will be a recommendation for free materials for the manufacture of print paper. That is a sop which he throws to the newspapers of the country, but if it is a just and proper recommendation, why not free materials for clothing, for shoes or for the building of our houses?

WILLIS J. ABBOT.

### JUSTICE BREWER ATTACKS MR. ROOSEVELT

David J. Brewer, associate justice of the United States supreme court, created a sensation by a speech delivered at a banquet held in New York City November 20. A New York dispatch to the Washington Herald tells the story in this way:

Justice Brewer spoke on "Public Office in Relation to Public Opinion," and surprised his audience by severe criticism and arraignment of President Roosevelt.

Justice Brewer not only reflected on the president openly, but by innuendo. He contrasted openly Roosevelt and Hughes.

Justice Brewer spoke of mob rule, denounced lynching, and declared that the country just now was "full of constitutional lawyers." He spoke of the sacredness of the constitution, and passed to the subject of rulers.

Among other things, Justice Brewer said: "Despotism and a mob are the two extremes of government. In the one the people have nothing to say, and in the other they have unrestrained voices. True democracy occupies the middle ground. The more constant and universal the voice of the people, the nearer the approach to an ideal government."

"Initiative and referendum make public opinion the quality controlling. The more promptly and more fully public officers carry into effect such public opinion the more truly is government of and by the people realized."

"Hasty legislation, if not always, is often a step backward. Many a bill needs executive veto, and in New York state it gets it. If the legislations were always wise the constitution would be a mistake for that attempts to confine legislation within certain limits."

"The constitution is not a criminal code. It is a theory of government, and is not to be read in favor of anybody, but is an instrument whose clear words have the force of vital and solemn truth, binding on the majority as well as the minority. In the light of these general thoughts, what are the relations of public officials to public opinion?"

"Is the officeholder an agent or a ruler? No one doubts that it is a base betrayal of trust for an officer elected upon one platform with a view, perhaps, of carrying its set principles into legislation, to turn around, after securing his office, and support the opposite side. For there is an implied promise in the acceptance of an

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